

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 191 828

SP 016 630

AUTHOR Silvernail, David L.
TITLE Assessing the Effectiveness of Preservice Field Experiences in Reducing Teacher Anxiety and Concern Levels.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 12p.: Revision of a paper presented at the Annual Conference of the New England Educational Research Organization (Lenox, MA, April 30-May 2, 1980).
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Anxiety: Beginning Teachers: *Field Experience Programs: Preservice Teacher Education: *Program Effectiveness: Self Concept: *Student Teachers: Student Teacher Supervisors: *Teacher Attitudes: Teacher Effectiveness: *Teacher Interns

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if preservice internship programs were more effective than a student teaching program in reducing beginning teacher anxiety and concern levels. Interns and student teachers completed an anxiety scale and a concerns questionnaire at the beginning and end of their field experience programs. The student teaching program consisted of one semester of practice teaching, while the internship programs consisted of two semesters of practice teaching along with methods courses that were taught concurrently. Results indicated that the interns showed significant decreases in anxiety scores. No significant difference was found for student teachers on teacher concerns. Further findings are discussed along with full descriptions of two teacher internship programs. (Author/CJ)

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ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PRESERVICE
FIELD EXPERIENCES IN REDUCING TEACHER ANXIETY
AND CONCERN LEVELS

David L. Silvernail
University of Southern Maine

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if pre-service internship programs were more effective than a student teaching program in reducing beginning teacher anxiety and concern levels. Forty-four interns and student teachers completed the Teaching Anxiety Scale and Teacher Concerns Questionnaire at the beginning and end of their field experiences. The student teaching program and the internship programs consisted of one semester and two semesters of practice teaching respectively. Method courses were taught concurrently with the field experience in the internship program. Results indicated that the interns showed significant decreases in anxiety scores. For teacher concerns, no significant changes were found for the student teachers. One group of interns showed significant reductions in Task scores and one group had significant reductions in Task and Self scores.

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Revision of paper presented at the
1980 Annual Conference of the New England
Educational Research Organization
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David L. Silvernail
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Teacher education preservice programs have received considerable criticism in recent years. One criticism has been that preservice teachers do not receive sufficient practical field experience prior to entry into the teaching ranks. In response to this criticism, educators have been encouraged, and in some cases, mandated, to provide preservice candidates with early, and more continuous, in-depth clinical experiences.

The purpose of this study was to determine if a preparation program which included early, and more continuous, in-depth field experience components was more effective than a traditional preparation program in preparing preservice teachers for entry into the profession. More specifically, the study was designed to examine the relative effectiveness of preservice internship programs as compared to a traditional student teaching program in reducing beginning teacher anxiety and concern levels. A secondary purpose of the study was to collect baseline data on the anxiety and concern levels of experienced teachers.

The dependent variables examined in this study were teacher anxiety and concerns. Several studies, most notably those by the National Education Association (NEA 1939; 1951; 1967), have documented the incidence of anxiety among classroom teachers, and Singh (1972) reported that student teachers experience more anxiety than in-service teachers. Coates and Thoresen (1976) report that beginning teachers have more concerns and different sources of anxiety than experienced teachers. The anxieties and

concerns of beginning teachers center around (1) the ability to maintain discipline, (2) students' liking of the teacher, (3) knowledge of subject matter, (4) what to do in case mistakes are made or there is a shortage of materials, and (5) how to relate personally to other faculty members, the school system, and parents.

Several researchers have found that teacher anxiety influences student behavior. Doyal and Forsyth (1973) report a positive correlation between teacher anxiety and students' test anxiety, and Petrusich (1966) and Harootunian and Koon (1970) found high teacher anxiety to be related to less verbal support of students. Washbourne and Heil (1960) reported that teacher anxiety was related to pupil achievement and Clark (1972) reported a significant relationship between anxiety levels and the awarding of grades.

Sample

The sample included all elementary education students enrolled in the student teaching and internship programs at the University of Southern Maine for 1979-80 (N=73). The preliminary analysis described in this paper is based on a smaller sample (N=44). A second sample consisted of the supervising teachers.

The student teaching program involves one semester of practice teaching in a field setting during the student's senior year. The student receives direct supervision by an experienced teacher. After completing methods courses in the university setting, students practice teach in two different grade levels for seven to eight weeks each, normally in two different schools or school districts. Data presented in this analysis is based on the fall semester program (N=15).

The two internship programs involve a full academic year of practice teaching in a field setting under the direct supervision of experienced teachers. Interns teach in various grade levels and work with specialists in areas such as remedial reading, art, music, etc. Juniors and seniors have the option of selecting the year-long internship programs in place of the traditional student teaching program.

In the Option A internship program (N=19), students practice teach four days a week at the field site and then return to the university on the fifth day for methods course instruction. Courses are taught by university faculty and practitioners. The Option B program (N=10) also involves four days of practice teaching and a fifth day of instruction. However, in this option, methods courses are taught by university faculty and practitioners at the field site (LEA).

Methodology

The student subjects completed a series of self-reporting instruments prior to and after completion of their practice teaching experience. In addition, students in the internship programs completed the instruments midway through their experience, at a point which coincided with the end of one phase of the student teaching program.

Instruments used in the study were (1) Teaching Anxiety Scale (TCHAS), (2) Teacher Concerns Questionnaire (TCQ), (3) Teaching Situation Reaction Scale (TSRS), and (4) Teaching Competencies Questionnaire (TCQ-S). Data describing the teaching experience, including information about the supervising teachers, was also collected from each subject. However, only data on the TCHAS and TCQ are reported here.

The supervising teachers were contacted by mail and requested to complete the Teaching Anxiety Scale, Teacher Concerns Questionnaire, and the Teaching Competencies Questionnaire. Eighty packets were mailed and 75 returned for a percent return rate of 94%. Data on the TCHAS and TCQ are reported in this paper.

The Teaching Anxiety Scale (TCHAS) is a 29-item Likert-type scale designed to measure anxiety specifically related to teaching. The items measure emotional reactions to various teaching situations and attitudes toward the teaching profession. High scores indicate high degree of anxiety. Borich and Madden (1977) report that the scale has sufficient reliability and validity for use in research.

The Teacher Concerns Questionnaire (TCQ) is a 15-item Likert-type questionnaire designed to measure teacher concerns in three areas: Self, Task, and Impact. The Self scale measures concerns such as getting a favorable evaluation from the cooperating teacher and being accepted by other teachers. The Task scale measures concerns such as lesson plan preparation and lack of instructional materials, and the Impact scale measures concerns for guiding student intellectual and emotional growth. Research by Fuller et al. (1973) indicates that all teachers experience these three types of concerns and that effective teachers have low Self and Task concern scores and high Impact concern scores. Data from several studies conducted by George (1978) reveal that the questionnaire has high reliability and sufficient validity.

Results

Table 1 reports the mean age and grade point averages of the groups. Analysis revealed a significant difference for age ($F=7.93$, $df=2, 42$, $p < .01$) but not for achievement level. No significant differences were found for sex.

TABLE 1
Mean Age and Grade Point Average of the Sample

Sample	N	Mean Age	S.D.	Mean GPA	S.D.
Student Teachers	15	30.27	11.22	3.11	.43
Interns-Option A	19	21.42	1.35	2.85	.67
Interns-Option B	10	22.30	3.05	3.02	.52

Table 2 reports pre-post mean scores, standard deviations, and correlated t values for the three groups on the Teaching Anxiety Scale. Analysis of variance revealed no significant differences between the groups on the pre- and posttests.

TABLE 2
Pre-Post Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Correlated t for TCHAS

Sample	N	PRE	S.D.	POST	S.D.	t
Student Teachers	15	65.20	12.38	60.00	13.53	0.60
Interns-Option A	19	71.00	13.05	64.00	13.28	3.48*
Interns-Option B	10	70.60	12.43	62.90	10.43	4.73**

Significant correlations of .82, .78, and .91 were found between pre- and posttests scores for the student teachers, Option A interns, and Option B interns respectively. Further analysis by means of the correlated t formula indicated significant difference in pre- and posttest scores for the two internship groups.

Pre-post mean scores, standard deviations, and correlated t values for the Teacher Concerns Questionnaire are reported in Tables 3-5. No significant differences were found between the groups on pre and post measures. Significant correlations ranging from .39 - .92 were found between pre- and posttest scores for the groups on the three scales. Further analysis using the correlated t formula resulted in the identification of three significant differences. Interns in Option A program showed significant declines in Self and Task scores and the Option B interns showed a significant decline in Task scores.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

TABLE 3
Pre-Post Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and Correlated t for TCQ-Self Scale

Sample	N	SELF				
		PRE	S.D.	POST	S.D.	t
Student Teachers	15	18.00	3.01	17.35	2.90	1.58
Interns-Option A	19	17.11	2.02	15.68	2.77	2.28*
Interns-Option B	10	17.10	2.03	16.90	1.54	0.21

TABLE 4
Pre-Post Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and Correlated t for TCQ-Task Scale

Sample	N	TASK				
		PRE	S.D.	POST	S.D.	t
Student Teachers	15	14.13	3.46	14.06	3.47	0.13
Interns-Option A	19	13.00	2.98	11.26	3.97	2.53*
Interns-Option B	10	14.70	1.16	13.60	1.58	2.54*

* $p < .05$

TABLE 5
Pre-Post Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and Correlated t for TCQ-Impact Scale

Sample	N	IMPACT				
		PRE	S.D.	POST	S.D.	t
Student Teachers	15	18.00	3.57	17.00	4.27	0.96
Interns-Option A	19	18.36	2.60	19.16	4.01	1.03
Interns-Option B	10	18.60	2.98	17.90	2.77	0.53

Table 6 reports the mean scores and standard deviations for the supervising teachers on the TCHAS and TCQ scales. Analysis of variance revealed a significant difference for Impact scores only ($F=2.98$, $df=3, 72$, $p < .05$).

TABLE 6
Means and Standard Deviations of Supervising Teachers on TCHAS and TCQ

Supervising Teachers	N	TCHAS		TCQ					
				Self		Task		Impact	
		$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.
Student Teachers	38	51.55	8.97	16.50	2.98	13.15	3.17	18.85	3.88
Interns-Option A	22	47.13	8.27	16.87	3.09	11.80	2.84	16.27	4.81
Interns-Option B	15	49.86	9.93	15.32	4.04	13.00	2.42	15.68	5.13

Discussion

The results indicate that both internship groups showed significant decreases in anxiety scores. At first glance, this suggests that the internship programs are more effective than the traditional student teaching program in reducing beginning teacher anxiety. However, the student teacher scores were lower than those of the interns to begin with and post scores were similar for all three groups. These results may be explained by the age and, possibly, the advanced maturity level of the student teachers.

With regard to teacher concerns, this preliminary analysis seems to indicate that the internship programs are effective in modifying beginning teacher concern levels. Option A interns showed significant reductions in Self and Task concerns, and Option B interns reduced significantly their Task concerns. However, it should be noted that neither intern group showed significant gains in Impact concerns.

As anticipated, the supervising teachers had lower anxiety scores than the preservice teachers. The student teacher supervisors also had lower Self and Task concern scores and higher Impact scores. In the case of the internship programs, Option B supervisors had lower Self and Task scores and Option A supervisors had higher Self and Task scores. In both programs, interns had higher Impact scores than their supervisors.

These preliminary findings suggest that the internship programs are more effective than a traditional student teaching program in preparing preservice teachers for entry into the profession. Supervising teachers exhibit less anxiety than preservice teachers and generally are

less concerned about Self and Task. The findings are mixed for Impact concerns with intern supervisors exhibiting less concern than their interns.

More definitive conclusions must await a thorough analysis after the study is completed. Furthermore, even if these preliminary findings are substantiated, the number of variables that may account for the significant differences are numerous, and therefore, additional studies will be necessary to identify which variables account for the differences.